



JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERAN SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS

MILITARY FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

1. **ISSUE:** To determine how best to support the families of Virginia's citizen soldiers during deployments.
2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - Currently there are two competing approaches to support military families. One is the Joint Forces Headquarters Family Assistance Centers (FAC) overseen by the National Guard and to be executed by military contractors. The other is a Military Family Support Center (MFSC) with an operational center recently moved from Roanoke to Salem. It is run by a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization titled the *Military Family Support Center, Inc.* It has existed entirely on private donations and is seeking some state funding in order to expand its operation to serve more families.
 - The FAC is asking for \$750,000 in state funding annually (a recurring requirement).
 - The MFSC is asking for \$450,000 in state funding. It will raise \$550,000 in private funding. This will create and operate 3 new centers plus one mobile facility.
3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - On the surface, it appears that two organizations, with the same goal of helping military families, are competing for the same state resources.
 - Actually, both programs have unique capabilities and services for military families.
 - FACs primary services are: information, referral, outreach, assistance with TRICARE, and financial and legal assistance. There are 8 FACs in Virginia.
 - One MFSC has been operational in Roanoke for over a year operating on donated funds alone. It provides services similar to FACs; however, it can also solicit private funds, advertise, and it has 120 volunteers. Many very practical needs of families are obtained at no cost.
 - Community involvement is a very positive aspect of MFSCs. This responds to Secretary Rumsfeld's key issue #1 outlined in his letter to Governor Kaine of "*connecting... state government, community resources and employers into a multi-disciplinary team to extend support opportunities.*"
 - FACs appear to be oriented primarily toward support of National Guard families although their mission statement is to include families of reservists also. Families of reservists are generally not aware of them. The MFSC does advertise and supports all military families equally.
4. **CONCLUSIONS:**
 - Both approaches are good and offer their own unique capabilities.
 - There should not be an atmosphere of competition nor of "turf guarding."
 - A combined and unified military/civilian approach is best. This approach would leverage state dollars and volunteerism, thereby, increasing support for families, and improving soldier morale.
5. **RECOMMENDATIONS:**
 - That the efforts of both FACs and MFSCs be encouraged and resourced.
 - That FACs and MFSCs be encouraged to collaborate –not compete- and where practicable, MFSCs and FACs should be co-located.
 - That the Citizen Soldier Support Council be funded and authorized to oversee the operation and disburse state funds. That \$1.2 million be authorized to resource this combined effort. (Future/recurring requests to be determined).